

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EURE-00 CPR-01 SCS-03 SCA-01 SSO-00
NSCE-00 INRE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 OMB-01
SY-05 SAJ-01 /064 W
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O R 251339Z JAN 77
FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3436
INFO AMCONSUL LENINGRAD
USIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 1127

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PFOR, SOPN, UR, US
SUBJECT: SOVIET DEMAND FOR REMOVAL OF AP CORRESPONDENT

REF: MOSCOW 1083

1. AP BUREAU CHIEF MASON STOPPED BY EMBASSY MORNING OF JANUARY 25 AND PROVIDED P&C COUNSELOR WITH FOLLOWING UPDATE ON INFORMATION CONVEYED REFTEL.
2. FOLLOWING SESSION WITH KHAZOV AT MFA ON JANUARY 24, MASON INFORMED KRIMSKY OF CHARGES. KRIMSKY DENIED ANY ILLEGAL CURRENCY MANIPULATIONS, AND SAID ONLY THING REMOTELY RESEMBLING MFA CHARGES WAS FACT THAT HE PAID HIS MAID PARTLY IN SERIES D COUPONS (USABLE IN SPECIAL FOREIGN CURRENCY STORES CATERING TO NON-SOVIET DIPLOMATIC AND BUSINESS COMMUNITY). THIS IS PRACTICE WHICH IS COMMON AMONG WESTERNERS RESIDENT HERE (AP BUREAU OFFICE PAYS ITS LOCAL EMPLOYEES PARTLY IN COUPONS) AND WHICH HAS BEEN SPECIFICALLY APPROVED BY U.P.D.K. IN RESPECT TO SALARY PAYMENTS TO HOUSEHOLD SERVANTS OF EMBASSY
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EMPLOYEES. COMMENT: EMBASSY UNDERSTANDS KRIMSKY'S MAID HAD BEEN HAULED IN FOR QUESTIONING AT ABOUT SAME TIME AS MFA DEMARCHE AND HAS SUBSEQUENTLY BEEN TOLD TO CEASE WORKING FOR KRIMSKY.

3. KRIMSKY VIEWS CHARGES AGSINT HIM AS TRUMPED-UP AND OBVIOUS PRETEXT FOR ACTION DESIRED ON OTHER GROUNDS.

KRIMSKY THEREFORE DOES NOT WISH TO LEAVE VOLUNTARILY.

4. AFTER CONSULTING WITH KRIMSKY, MASON CALLED AP PRESIDENT KEITH FULLER IN U.S., ACQUAINTING HIM WITH BACKGROUND AND NATURE OF CHARGES AND KRIMSKY'S OWN VIEW-POINT. FULLER SAID THAT IF KRIMSKY WISHED TO REMAIN IN SOVIET UNION AP WOULD BACK HIM UP. FULLER REPORTEDLY EXPRESSED VIEW THAT AP WOULD NOT EXPEL ITS OWN EMPLOYEE, THUS DOING SOVIETS' WORK FOR THEM.

5. MASON NOW PLANS SEEK EARLIEST FACE-TO-FACE MEETING WITH MFA PRESS DIVISION CHIEF SOFINSKIY TO PASS ON AP DECISION NOT TO SEND KRIMSKY HOME. IN MEANTIME, MASON IS SEEKING TO KEEP STORY FROM BREAKING, WHICH WOULD FORCE SOVIETS' HAND. MASON BELIEVES THERE IS CHANCE THAT IF ISSUE DOES NOT BECOME IMMORTALIZED IN PRINT SOVIETS MAY AGREE TO RESOLVE MATTER SHORT OF KRIMSKY'S EXCLUSION. MASON IS INFORMING HIS COLLEAGUES FROM WESTERN MEDIA OF THIS POSITION AND IS ASKING THEIR RESTRAINT AND COOPERATION.

6. ACTION: EMBASSY RECOMMENDS DEPARTMENT CALL IN SOVIET PRESS COUNSELOR TO INFORM HIM OF KHAZOV'S STATEMENT TO MASON AND BENSON. WE FEEL IT WOULD BE IN ORDER TO OBSERVE THAT THE CHARGE CITED IN THE REQUEST FOR KRIMSKY'S REMOVAL CANNOT BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY, SINCE IT IS COMMON KNOWLEDGE THAT VIRTUALLY ALL WESTERN CORRESPONDENTS AND BUSINESSMEN PAY PART OF THE SALARY OF HOUSEHOLD SERVANTS IN D COUPONS AND IN RESPECT TO DIPLOMATS AT LEAST, UPDK HAS SPECIFICALLY SANCTIONED THE PRACTICE. THERE-CONFIDENTIAL

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FORE, WE HAVE NO ALTERNATIVE TO CONCLUDING THAT THE CHARGES AGAINST KRIMSKY ARE A TRANSPARENTLY FABRICATED ATTEMPT TO GET RID OF A CORRESPONDENT WHOSE REPORTING DISPLEASES THE SOVIET AUTHORITIES. WE SHOULD THEN LEAVE SOVIETS WITH CLEAR UNDERSTANDING THAT THEIR PROCEEDING WITH THE EXPULSION THREATENED IN KHAZOV'S PRESENTATION WOULD LEAVE USG NO ALTERNATIVE BUT TO UNDERTAKE RECIPROCAL ACTION. TOON

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